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PROFESSOR HUSTON SMITH



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my publisher,
and all the scholars in the field of Islamic studies
who made this work possible

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Lailat. . . see LAYLAT. . .

Lakhmids. An Arab dynasty which ruled a pre-Islamic kingdom in present day Iraq. Its capital was Hīrā', near Najaf, and it extended down to the Persian Gulf. The Lakhmids depended upon the Sassanids for their political existence, forming a buffer on the western edge of the Persian Empire. Many of the tribes making up the Lakhmid kingdom, some of whom were Nestorian Christians, joined with the Muslims in the onslaught upon the Persians, helping to bring about the Persian defeat at Qādisiyyah.

La'nah (lit. "cursing"). An ancient, but rare ritual of mutual imprecation which can be used to resolve certain disputes. See LI'ĀN; AHL al-KISĀ'I.

Laqab. Honorific names such as those adopted by Caliphs or Sultans.

Laṭā'if (the plural of *luff*, "subtlety"). Subtle centers in the body mentioned by some, but not all, schools of mysticism. These are similar to the *cakras* of Hindu Tantrism, but their theory is neither so diverse nor so developed.

They vary according to school, but include as most important the forehead as seat of consciousness and the perception of forms; the breast as the focus of breath, or life; and the heart – but not the physical heart – as the junction of the individual with Being, or with what is supra-individual and beyond form. See NAQSHBANDIYYAH; as-SIRR.

Law, see SHARĪ'AH.

Lawāmiḥ (lit. "flashes"). Intuitions and understandings of a spiritual order which suddenly settle upon the soul. Also, the title of several books by Sufis.

Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh says:

Rarely come the Divine intuitions except on a sudden, lest the slaves should claim them as a result of their preparations.

al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz, (lit. "the guarded tablet"). The Koran says of itself that "it is written on the

guarded tablet" (85:21-22). This has become the term for metaphysical substance (Aristotle's *hyle* or Sanskrit *prakṛti*). The corresponding Islamic term for metaphysical form (the Greek *eidos* or the Sanskrit *puruṣa*) is the "Pen" (*al-qalam*) which writes upon the *lawḥ al-mahfūz*. The tablet is also the repository of destiny (*al-qadr*), giving rise to the expression it is "written" (*maktūb*), for something fated. See BEING; FIVE DIVINE PRESENCES.

Laylah. . . see LAYLAT. . .

Laylat al-Barā'ah. On the night of the 15th Sha-bān religious observances are held in many places in the Islamic world in the belief that destinies for the coming year are fixed that night. (It is the night before the day of the 15th which is the holy night since the Islamic day runs from sunset to sunset.) In Arabic it is called the *Laylat al-Barā'ah* ("night of forgiveness"). In Iran and India it is called *Shab-i Barat*.

Laylat al-Isrā' wa-l-Mi'rāj, see NIGHT JOURNEY.

Laylat al-Qadr (lit. "night of power" or "destiny"). The night in the year 610 A.D. in which the Koran descended, in its entirety, into the soul of the Prophet. It is one of the last ten nights of the month of Ramaḍān. For this reason the last ten days of Ramaḍān are taken to be particularly holy. In that night the Angel Gabriel first spoke to the Prophet, the Koran was revealed, and the Divine mission began.

The Sūrah 97 describes the Night of Power as "better than a thousand months. . . peace until the rising of the dawn." It is related that 'Ā'ishah, the Prophet's favourite wife, explained that the *Laylat al-Qadr* is the "soul of the Prophet". That is to say, since the Prophet is also all of creation in the form of a man, that night corresponded to his soul. This also implies that the true nature of the human soul is a receptacle for God's revelation.

There is a widespread belief that the Night of Power is the 27th of Ramaḍān. It is certain that this common belief originates in Manicheism where the 27th day of the month of fasting is the celebrated anniversary of the death of Mani, for there

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are no Islamic sources for such an idea. See KORAN.

Lebanon. Population estimated at over 3,575,000. There have apparently been significant demographic changes in the last twenty years; the population balance has shifted towards the Muslims. It is now estimated that 48% of the population are Muslim; 40% are Christian; 10% are Druze; 2% are 'Alawīs and Ismā'īlīs. Of the Muslims, it is estimated that 45% may be Twelve-Imām Shī'ite while the Sunnīs are 35% (formerly Sunnīs were in the majority). Of the Christians, 60% are Maronites, and the rest are Greek Orthodox, Melkites, and a number of smaller Christian churches. There are more than 600,000 Druzes distributed throughout the countries of the Levant including Syria and Israel; since the 1970s, the 'Alawī sect has been in power in Syria. The various Shī'ites of Lebanon are called *Metawila* inside the country. See 'ALAWĪS; AMAL; DRUZES; ḤIZB ALLĀH; METAWILA; SHĪ'ISM; SUNNĪ.

Legacies (Ar. *waṣāyā*; sing. *waṣīyyah*). Bequests made through the will of a testator can amount to only one third of his inheritable property under Islamic law (a condition which is taken from Roman law). As regards the other two-thirds, or indeed the whole estate if no bequest has been made, a complex law of inheritance exists which divides the estate among inheritors according to established schedules. Wills may be oral, but oral or written, they must be attested by two witnesses. A bequest to an inheritor, above the portion due to him by the law of inheritance, must be approved by the other inheritors. The law of a third also limits the property which may be given to endowments for pious works, the Dead Hand (*waqf*). No limit is placed on the portion of one's estate which may be disposed of as gift before one's death. See INHERITANCE; WAQF.

Leilat. . . . see LAYLAT. . .

"Letters, Isolated", see al-ḤURŪF al-MUQAṬṬA'ĀT.

Letters, Science of the see 'ILM al-ḤURŪF.

Lex Talionis, see QIṢĀS.

Li'ān (lit. "imprecation"). An uncommon form of divorce which is nonetheless possible in Islamic

law, based upon the husband's accusing his wife of infidelity. He supports the accusation by taking an oath four times (instead of the requirement, otherwise, for the infidelity to have been seen by four witnesses) and by calling imprecations upon himself in case of falsehood on his part.

The wife then denies the accusation by taking four oaths, and calls imprecations upon herself in case of falsehood on her part. The marriage is thereby dissolved, and the two can never be remarried to each other. The wife keeps the dowry. See DIVORCE.

Libya. (Libyan Arab Republic. Instead of the usual word *jumhūriyyah* for "republic", the word *jamāhīriyyah*, based, no doubt symbolically, on the collective plural, is used.) The estimated population in 1986 was 3,654,000. The country is 98% Muslim, of whom some forty thousand are 'Ibādī Khārijites. The Sunnīs are largely of the Mālikī rite. One third of the population is affiliated with the Sanūsī order (which, outside Libya, now only has followers in the Sudan). See 'IBĀDITES; SANŪSIS.

Limbo, see al-A'RĀF; ESCHATOLOGY.

Lord, see ar-RABB; SAYYID.

Lot, see LŪṬ.

Luqmān. A figure mentioned in the Koran in Sūrah 31:11, as "a man having wisdom". He was known in Arab legend as a sage, and later tradition attached to his name a corpus of proverbs and moral tales reminiscent of those attributed to Aesop in Western Europe.

Lur. A people in Iran, most of whom are of Indo-European origin. They speak a language which is close to ancient Persian or Pahlavi. The Lurs number over 500,000 of whom the majority are Shī'ite. Many are nomadic and graze their flocks in the region of the Zagros Mountains of southwest Iran.

Lūṭ. The Prophet Lot. He is mentioned in the Koran (6:88); (7:78); (11:77); (15:59); (21:71); (22:44); (26:161); (27:55); (29:31); (37:133); (54:33). He is described as a warner to his people, the inhabitants of the "overwhelmed cities" (*al-Mu'tafikah*), of God's impending punishment for their indecency and sodomy, but is rejected. His household are saved except for his wife who "lingered".